www.mms.gov

Domestic Energy for America: Minerals Management Service's Offshore Minerals Management

Meeting today's energy needs – as well as the energy needs of the future – is the daily challenge of the Minerals Management Service's (MMS) Offshore Minerals Management (OMM) program. As the steward of mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), MMS is responsible for all phases of mineral resource management in Federal waters, about 1.76 billion acres of submerged lands seaward of the States' coastal waters. The OCS provides 21 percent of the natural gas, 30 percent of the oil produced in the U.S., substantial quantities of sand for beach renourishment and wetlands protection, and over $8 billion per year in revenue to the Treasury. Energy production in the OCS plays a key role in the President's National Energy Policy, in meeting the Nation's energy needs, supporting the economy, national security, and quality of life.

The MMS has worked diligently for over 20 years to build a successful offshore program with a legal and regulatory framework that provides safe and environmentally sound OCS mineral resource development for the benefit of the American people. Additionally, MMS is committed to achieving the proper balance between providing energy for the American people and protecting unique, sensitive marine and coastal environments.

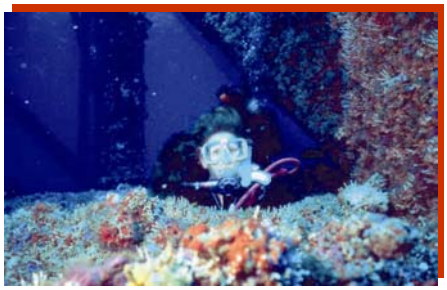
The Agency's robust environmental studies program aims to protect the offshore environment from potential adverse impacts of energy exploration. Marine archaeology, ocean currents, life forms in the extreme deep waters, and sea ice conditions in Alaska and marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico are examples of some of the environmental studies that are currently underway. The studies provide scientific information that is critical to making sound energy resource and environmental management decisions.

The Rigs to Reefs program provides a first-rate example of environmental stewardship and protection. The program supports and encourages the reuse of oil and gas platforms in the OCS for reef development. Whether a platform is in use or retired, it can provide two to three acres of living and feeding habitat for thousands of underwater species whose survival depends on the protection provided by the structures.

Safety in the offshore workplace is a top priority for MMS. An international leader in offshore safety, MMS has established a regulatory program that sets standards for the design of facilities and the conduct of operation. The Technology Assessment and Research program evaluates new technologies for possible use by the offshore industry toward the dual goal of achieving an ever-increasing level of efficiency and providing the safest possible environment for offshore workers. Sound engineering standards and rigorous inspections are critical. The MMS works closely with the energy industry to ensure the continued safety of offshore production facilities for both the workers and the marine environment.

Energy exploration in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico is perhaps the most exciting aspect of offshore energy exploration today. Most of the

energy discoveries of recent years have been found in the Gulf's deep waters, with 54 percent of the Gulf's active leases in deep waters. Between 1995 and 2002, deep water oil production rose 535 percent, while deep water gas production rose 620 percent. The trend is expected to continue with exploration in deep waters (1,000 feet and deeper) and ultra-deep waters (5,000 feet and deeper).



The MMS is also a cooperating agency in discussions regarding renewable energy development in the OCS. The Agency provides expertise on marine environmental and engineering issues, as well as the management of potential competing uses of the OCS.

Eroding coastlines are an increasing concern as more and more people choose to make their homes in coastal areas. The OMM sand and gravel program fulfills the demanding role of providing sand and gravel to renourish coastal areas. The program provides geologic and environmental information – developed through partnerships with 14 coastal States – to identify and make available OCS sand deposits that are suitable for beach nourishment and coastal wetlands protection. This proactive management and coastal restoration effort is critical with helping States and local communities in their efforts to stabilize receding shorelines.

The MMS's Offshore Minerals Management program works to secure America's energy future and quality of life while protecting offshore workers and the environment.